

SECTION 4

Reading for Understanding

► Key Ideas

BEFORE, YOU LEARNED

Rising tensions between Britain and the colonies led to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

NOW YOU WILL LEARN

As fighting continued, Americans decided to declare their independence from Britain.

► Vocabulary

TERMS & NAMES

Ethan Allen leader of a Patriot group of fighters known as the Green Mountain Boys

Second Continental Congress America's government during the Revolutionary War

Continental Army America's Patriot army during the Revolutionary War

Thomas Paine political radical and the author of *Common Sense*

Declaration of Independence document that declared American independence from Britain

Thomas Jefferson delegate from Virginia who wrote the Declaration of Independence

BACKGROUND VOCABULARY

siege when enemy forces surround a town or city in order to force it to surrender

artillery cannon and large guns



Visual Vocabulary Thomas Jefferson

► Reading Strategy

Re-create the diagram shown at right. As you read and respond to the KEY QUESTIONS, use the boxes to sequence events.

See Skillbuilder Handbook, page R5.

SEQUENCE EVENTS

Lexington
and
Concord

Battle of
Bunker
Hill

Declaring Independence

One American's Story

No one knows who warned the colonists about the British plan to march on Concord. But suspicion has always fallen on Margaret Kemble Gage, the American-born wife of British General Thomas Gage. Despite her husband's lofty position as commander-in-chief of the British army in America, Margaret's loyalty remained torn between England and America. Explaining her mixed feelings about the war, Margaret Gage quoted Blanche from Shakespeare's play *King John*:

PRIMARY SOURCE

¶ The Sun's overcast with blood: fair day, adieu!
Which is the side that I must go withal?
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
And in their rage, I having hold of both,
They whirl asunder and dismember me . . .
Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose.
Assured loss, before the match be played. ¶¶

— Margaret Kemble Gage, quoted in *Paul Revere's Ride*

After the British retreat at Lexington and Concord, even Margaret's husband suspected his wife had revealed the secret plans. Fearing she might do the same again, Gage sent his wife back to England. Like many others, Margaret Gage was forced to make difficult choices as the conflict began to spread.

The Siege of Boston

▼ KEY QUESTION What events led to the Battle of Bunker Hill?

After the fighting at Lexington and Concord, British troops retreated to safety in Boston. As General Gage considered his next move, over 15,000 militiamen from all over New England surrounded the town. Boston was now

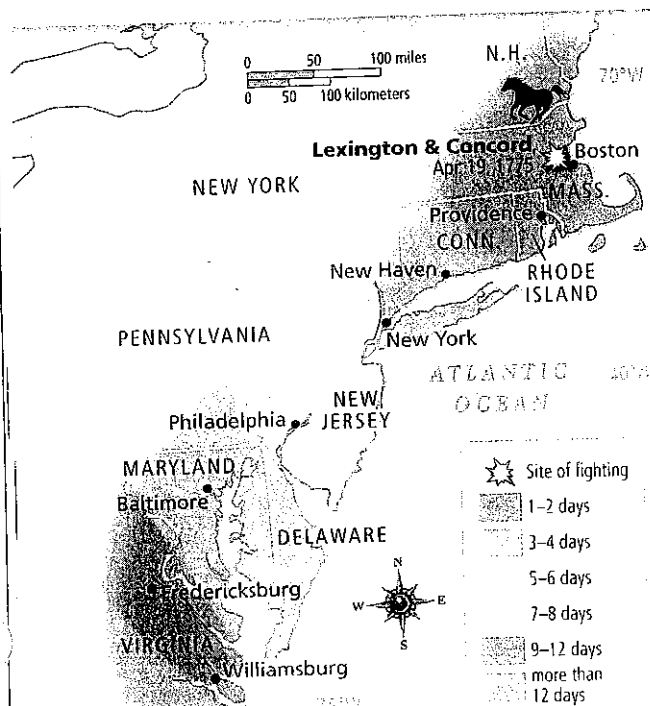


Margaret Kemble Gage
by John Singleton Copley

News of the Fighting Spreads 1775

Click here to see the interactive map
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News of Lexington and Concord spread quickly through the colonies. Reports were carried by messengers on horseback before they appeared in the press.



Source: Adapted from Paul Revere's Ride, D. Fischer

Connect Geography & History

Draw Conclusions How many miles could news spread in a two-day period?

under siege—encircled by military forces determined to force the British to surrender.

The Continental Army Is Formed In 1775, Boston stood at the tip of a long peninsula that connected the town to the mainland. Because the town was almost completely surrounded by water, it could not be attacked easily by land. However, if the Americans succeeded in placing cannon on the hills overlooking the bays that surrounded the town, the British would be forced to surrender.

The Americans came up with a daring plan. They would capture a British fort, far to the north, and drag the fort's cannon back to Boston. On May 10, 1775, Americans attacked Britain's Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain. **Ethan Allen** led this band of backwoods fighters known as the Green Mountain Boys. They captured the fort and its large supply of **artillery**, or cannon and large guns.

On the same day as the attack on Fort Ticonderoga, the **Second Continental Congress** began meeting in Philadelphia. This would be America's government during the war. Delegates included John and Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Patrick Henry. They agreed to create a **Continental Army**. George Washington, who was from Virginia, was chosen as its commanding general.

Battle of Bunker Hill Meanwhile, tensions were building in Boston in June 1775. Across the harbor

from Boston stood the town of Charlestown. Militiamen were positioned on Bunker Hill and Breeds Hill, which rose above the town. They built fortifications on Breeds Hill. Alarmed, the British decided to attack.

General William Howe crossed the bay with 2,200 British soldiers. Bostonians watched in horror as the British set fire to Charlestown. Then, marching in ranks, the British climbed Breeds Hill toward the American militia. On the hilltop, the militia waited. According to legend, Colonel William Prescott ordered, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes!" When the British got close, the militia unleashed a barrage of fire. The British fell back and then charged again. Eventually, they forced the militia off the hill.

The redcoats had won the Battle of Bunker Hill, but at tremendous cost. More than 1,000 were killed or wounded, compared with some 400 militia casualties. "The loss we have sustained is greater than we can bear," wrote General Gage. The inexperienced colonial militia had held its own against the world's most powerful army.

SEQUENCE EVENTS Describe the events that led to the Battle of Bunker Hill.

The Conflict Spreads

KEY QUESTION Why were the British forced to leave Boston?

In their coffee houses, inns, and taverns, colonists discussed the deepening crisis. Most colonists still hoped for peace. Even some Patriot leaders still considered themselves loyal subjects of the king. They blamed Parliament for the terrible events taking place.

The Olive Branch Petition In July 1775, moderates in Congress drafted the Olive Branch Petition and sent it to London. This document asked the king to restore harmony between Britain and the colonies. Some members opposed the petition but signed it anyway as a last hope.

The king rejected the petition, however, and announced new measures to punish the colonies. He would use the British navy to block American ships from leaving their ports. He would send thousands of hired German soldiers to fight in America. "When once these rebels have felt a smart blow, they will submit," he declared.

The colonial forces were not going to back down, though. They thought they were equal to the British troops. George Washington knew otherwise. The British soldiers were professionals, while the colonial troops had little training and were poorly equipped. The Massachusetts militia barely had enough gunpowder to fight one battle.

Washington Arrives During the summer of 1775, Washington arrived at the militia camp near Boston. He immediately began to gather supplies and train the army. In the fall, Washington approved a bold plan. Continental Army troops would invade Quebec, in eastern Canada. They hoped to defeat British forces there and draw Canadians into the Patriot cause. One of the leaders of this expedition was Benedict Arnold. He was an officer who had played a role in the victory at Fort Ticonderoga.

After a grueling march across Maine, Arnold arrived at Quebec in November 1775. Under harsh winter conditions, the Americans launched their attack but failed. After several months, they limped home in defeat.

The British Retreat from Boston In Massachusetts, the Continental Army continued its siege of Boston. The British lay trapped in the town, which stood like an island protected by the surrounding waters of the bays. They gazed nervously across the bays to the opposite shores, where thousands of American forces waited on the hills.

Neither side was able or willing to break the standoff. However, help for Washington was on the way. Cannon were being hauled from Fort Ticonderoga. This was a difficult job, since there were no roads across the snow-covered mountains. It took soldiers, under the leadership of American General Henry Knox, two months to drag the 59 heavy weapons to Boston, where they arrived in January 1776.

Washington positioned these cannon on Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston. The Americans, now in a position of power, threatened to bombard the city. General Howe, who was in charge of

(below) This statue, which stands in the Boston Public Garden, commemorates the day General Washington drove the British from the city.



the British forces, decided to withdraw his troops. On March 17, over 7,000 British soldiers departed Boston in more than 100 ships. Boston Patriots joyfully reclaimed their city. Although the British had damaged homes and destroyed possessions, Boston was still standing. The British would never return.

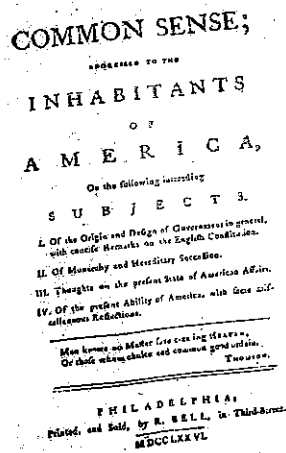
▲ **CAUSES AND EFFECTS** Explain how the British were forced to leave Boston.

Rebellion Becomes Revolution

▼ **KEY QUESTION** What ideas can be found in the Declaration of Independence?

As the British evacuated Boston, Americans debated the crisis. Most Americans hoped to avoid a final break with Britain. However, the publication of a pamphlet titled *Common Sense* helped convince many Americans that it was time to fight for independence.

***Common Sense* Changes Minds** *Common Sense* had been written by **Thomas Paine**, a recent immigrant from England. Paine was considered a political radical. He believed that all men, not just land-owners, should have the right to vote. He also ridiculed the idea that kings ruled by the will of God. Calling George III "the Royal Brute," Paine argued that all monarchies were corrupt. He also disagreed with the economic arguments for remaining with Britain. "Our corn," he said, "will fetch its price in any market in Europe." He believed that America should follow its own destiny.



(above) political writer Thomas Paine (below) the pamphlet, *Common Sense*, that moved many colonists toward revolution

PRINCIPAL IDEAS

“Everything that is right & natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the wailing voice of nature cries, ’Tis time to part.” Even the distance at which the Almighty had placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of heaven.”

—Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Common Sense was an instant success. Published in January, it sold more than 100,000 copies in three months. Americans were beginning to understand that it was time to fight for independence.

A Time for Decision The Continental Congress remained undecided. A majority of the delegates did not support independence. Even so, in May 1776, Congress adopted a resolution authorizing each of the 13 colonies to establish its own government.

On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a key resolution. It called the colonies “free and independent states” and declared that “all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is . . . totally dissolved.” Congress debated the resolution, but not all the delegates were ready to vote on it.

In the meantime, however, Congress appointed a committee to draft a

Declaration of Independence The committee included Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and **Thomas Jefferson**.

The group chose Jefferson to compose the Declaration. Two reasons for selecting Jefferson were that he was an excellent writer and that he came from Virginia. The members knew that no independence movement could succeed without Virginia's support.

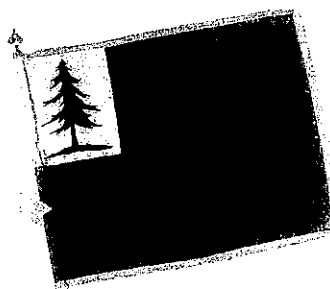
Jefferson immediately went to work. In two weeks, he had prepared most of the Declaration. (See pages 184–188.) On July 2, 1776, Congress considered Lee's resolution again. Despite some opposition, the measure passed. The colonies now considered themselves independent from Great Britain.

COMPARING *Symbols of Freedom*

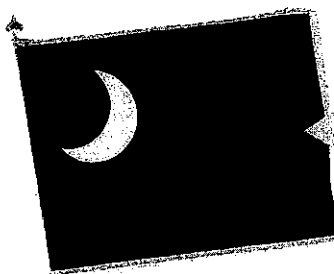
REVOLUTIONARY FLAGS

During the Revolution, Patriot militiamen created elaborate flags to represent their colony and military traditions. Often these flags were carried into battle.

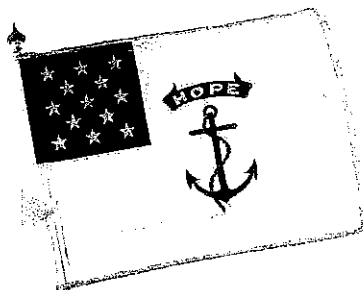
This flag was carried to the Battle of Bunker Hill by Massachusetts militiamen in 1775. The Liberty Tree represented freedom in the colonies.



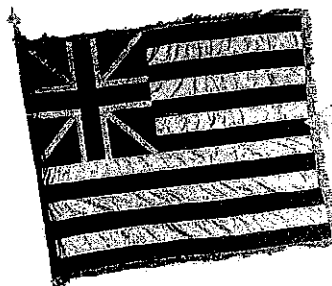
Regiments from South Carolina adorned their flag with a crescent. Another version had the word "Liberty" stitched in the crescent.



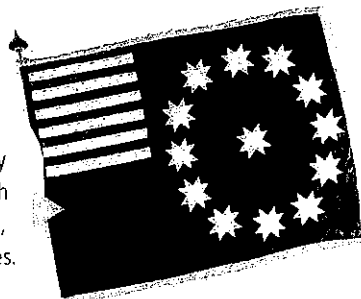
This flag was carried to Boston by Rhode Island militiamen in 1775.



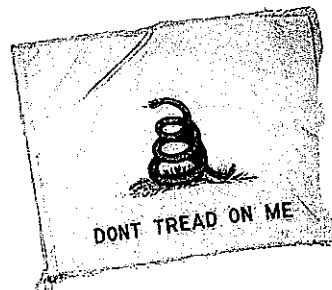
This flag, created in 1775, was adorned with the British Union, as well as 13 red and white stripes.



The North Hampton County Militia adorned its flag with 13 white stars, a blue field, and 13 red and white stripes.



This was the flag of Gadsden, South Carolina's Continental Navy. The snake was a warning to those who would tread on liberty.



Activity

Create a Revolutionary Flag

Create a flag that might have been carried in the Revolution. Use symbols to represent your state or hometown.

CRITICAL THINKING Make Inferences Why did some Patriot flags include British symbols? What does that tell you about some colonists' desire for independence?

The Declaration is Adopted Two days later, on July 4, 1776, Congress adopted the document that proclaimed independence—the Declaration of Independence. John Hancock, the president of the Congress, was the first to sign the Declaration. According to tradition, he wrote in large letters and commented, “There, I guess King George will be able to read that.” The core idea of the Declaration is based on the philosophy of John Locke. This idea is that people have natural and unalienable rights, or rights that government cannot take away. Jefferson stated this belief in what was to become the Declaration’s best-known passage.

CONNECT to the Essential Question

What drove the colonists to declare independence from Great Britain?



All regions and groups

- feared that British troops might be used against colonists
- suffered from tax increases (Stamp Act 1765)
- were angered that the right to tax had been taken away from colonial assemblies (Stamp Act 1765)
- suffered from duty on imports (Sugar Act 1764; Townshend Acts 1767)



Southern Colonies

- Planters were angry that the Proclamation of 1763 restricted them from speculating in land beyond the Appalachian Mountains.



New England and Middle Colonies

- Merchants suffered from interference in colonial trade (Tea Act 1773).
- New England merchants suffered from the Sugar Act of 1764, which raised duty on sugar
- New Yorkers were angry they had to pay to house troops in New York (Quartering Act 1765)



Backcountry

- angered by Proclamation of 1763, which restricted movement west
- Some Scots-Irish had never felt loyalty to Britain.

CRITICAL THINKING Draw Conclusions What issues united the colonists against Great Britain?

PRIMARY SOURCE

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”


—Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence

If a government disregards these rights, Jefferson explained, it loses its right to govern. The people then have the right to abolish that government, by force if necessary. They can form a new government that will protect their rights. When Jefferson spoke of “the people,” however, he meant only free, white, landowning men. Women, the enslaved, and those without property were left out of the Declaration.

The Declaration also explained the reasons for breaking with Britain. It declared the colonies to be free and independent states. This was a very serious action—treason from the British point of view—and the delegates knew it. John Hancock urged the delegates to stand together in mutual defense. He realized that if the war were lost, they might all be hanged.

The Declaration closed with this pledge: “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

Americans had declared independence. Now they had to win their freedom on the battlefield.

 **MAIN IDEAS & DETAILS** Explain what ideas can be found in the Declaration of Independence.

4

Section Assessment



ONLINE QUIZ

For test practice, go to
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TERMS & NAMES

1. Explain the importance of

- Ethan Allen
- Thomas Jefferson
- Continental Army
- Thomas Paine
- Second Continental Congress
- Declaration of Independence

USING YOUR READING NOTES

2. **Sequence Events** Complete the diagram that you started at the beginning of this section.

Lexington
and
Concord

Battle of
Bunker
Hill

KEY IDEAS

3. **Make Inferences** What forced the British to leave Boston?

4. **Analyze Primary Sources** What does the Declaration of Independence say about government and the rights of the people?

CRITICAL THINKING

5. **Draw Conclusions** Why did it take the colonists so long to declare independence?

6. **Make Inferences** Why do you think *Common Sense* was so popular?

7. **Sequence Events** Why do you think militiamen surrounded the British in Boston?

8. **Map** **Graph** Research the population statistics of colonial Boston. Make a graph to show how the population of Boston changed during the Revolution.